

Interdisciplinary Japanese Studies On Site

NHK

The Japan Broadcasting Corporation (NHK) launched a new series called “The Japan Syndrome” focusing on the social malaise in Japan and its solution. In this context, a number of researchers from the German Institute for Japanese Studies were interviewed by NHK. The series will be broadcast from January to March 2011. *J.A.*



How to make voters happy?

At first glance it may not be evident that politics has much influence on individual happiness. Certainly politics is unable to make the individual happy, yet that being said it is more than capable of improving external factors that enable a person to lead a happy life, for example by guaranteeing public safety or limiting pollution. Put differently, politics can create frame conditions that make it easier to lead a life.

One could assume that that should be the case in a wealthy, safe and clean country such as Japan. However, favourable preconditions for leading a good life notwithstanding, more than one in three Japanese consider themselves unhappy. Against this background the question has to be asked how the political protagonists, i.e. the parties, have been addressing happiness. After all, in a democratic parliamentary system they claim to conduct their business “by, for and together with the citizens”.

The new DIJ research project “How to Make Voters Happy? The Promise of Happiness by Japan’s Political Parties between Continuities and Discontinui-

ties” is not only interested in the political parties of the postwar period, but also in their predecessors of the pre-war period, because despite the radical changes before and after 1945 – including the shift from authoritarianism and militarism to democracy and pacifism – there are obvious continuities in political parties’ personnel, programmes and organizations. This, at first glance, curious circumstance inevitably invites an inquiry into whether such continuities also exist in the political parties’ promise of happiness. Furthermore, the question arises whether this promise, as time has passed by, has followed the changing *zeitgeist*. One could assume, for instance, that from the 1970s onwards, against the backdrop of the upcoming post-materialism, happiness has not been defined exclusively in terms of increasing materialistic wealth.

Within the DIJ research project these questions shall be answered by analysing primary sources that historically relevant parties on both sides of the political spectrum have produced since the beginning of parliamentarianism in the late nineteenth century.

WWW. CONTEMPORARY- JAPAN.ORG

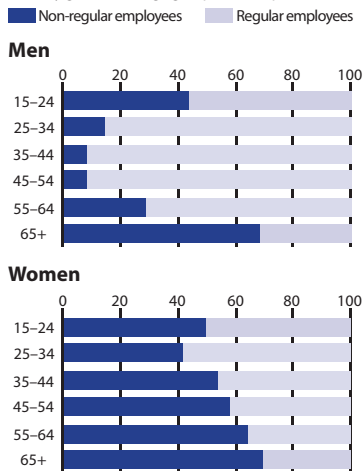
The second issue of the DIJ’s peer-reviewed journal *Contemporary Japan* will be out in March. The editors have extended their service for readers and potential authors by launching a new website (www.contemporary-japan.org) that ties up all information about *CJ*. In addition to free online access to the inaugural issue of *CJ*, visitors also have access to all articles ever published in *CJ*’s predecessor publication *Japanstudien*.

The new website explains *CJ*’s extensive language support for non-native English writers, a service that is probably unique among academic journals on Japan. The editors are confident that this offer will enable and encourage many researchers from outside English language regions to present the results of their work to the international community.

▲ **Dr. Chris Winkler**, political scientist, heads the DIJ project “How to Make Voters Happy? The Promise of Happiness by Japan’s Political Parties between Continuities and Discontinuities”.
winkler@dijtokyo.org

Elder employment in Japan

Regular versus non-regular employment
(by gender and age group, 2010, in per cent)



Source: Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications

Women and older people form the biggest groups of non-regular workers in Japan.

Dr. Florian Kohlbacher is deputy director at the DIJ.

Alexander Witzke is a doctoral candidate at the University of Bonn and currently a doctoral research fellow at the DIJ.

Dr. Masa Higo is a researcher at the Sloan Center on Aging and Work at Boston College, USA.

Contact:
kohlbacher@dijtokyo.org

Japan's population is greying and shrinking rapidly, and so is its labour force. This carries vast consequences for individual workers, companies, as well as the national economy as a whole. Research at the DIJ reveals a mismatch between older workers' preferences and employment options offered by companies, while public policy measures seem insufficient in redressing the balance.

Managing the business implications of demographic change is a crucial factor in determining the fate of Japan's economy in the 21st century. On the one hand, companies are facing the spectre of a looming workforce crisis in the form of a potential labour shortage and knowledge loss when veteran experts among the large baby boomer cohort (1947–1949) retire. On the other hand, older employees often see themselves confronted with a 5-year gap between mandatory retirement age and pension eligibility age. These facts contribute to one of the highest labour force participation rates of older people worldwide, with more than 20% of Japanese aged 65 and older still working.

Non-regular senior employees

Taking a closer look at the type of employment for those older people who are still working reveals that almost 70% of those aged 65 and older are in non-regular employment. Hence this group has by far the largest percentage of non-regular workers, a figure that has been on the rise for the past 25 years and in particular in the last decade. In addition to age differences, a gender gap is also prevalent, with women forming a much higher percentage of non-regular workers than men. However, looking at the gender divide by age groups indicates that the differences only hold true for the younger cohorts (with the exception of the youngest age group 15–24), while it disappears for the age group 65 plus.

Keep working: Ikigai vs. financial need

The crucial question is whether older workers today prefer to be in regular or non-regular employment. Data by the semi-governmental Japan Institute for Labour Policy and Training (JILPT) reveal that 25% of those working beyond

age 65 do so because they feel it gives them purpose and a meaning in life (*ikigai*) and thus they can contribute to society; however, 56.1% have to work in order to earn a living. The common view regards non-regular employment as problematic in particular for the latter group which depends on paid work as their primary source of income. However, for some seniors, the increased flexibility that comes with non-regular employment is a highly welcome advantage. Another issue for both types of older workers is the limited opportunities for employment after age 65 and the difficulties in finding it. This situation has also led to increased entrepreneurial activity, with more and more older people becoming self-employed and setting up their own start-up companies. A particularly fine example of such “silver entrepreneurship” is *Kōreisha* (高齢社; literally: Old Age Corp.), a temporary staff agency exclusively for people aged 60 and older. The company was founded by Kenji Ueda – now aged 73 – after retirement from his regular employment at a major utility firm more than ten years ago.

Productive ageing

In an ageing and shrinking society, the active participation of older people in the labour market is crucial in order to ensure sustainable development of the economy as well as successful and productive ageing on an individual level. The main reason for the limited participation of older people in the labour market – both in terms of quantity (the participation rate is much higher for younger cohorts) and in terms of quality (e.g. non-regular versus regular employment) – lies in a mismatch between supply and demand. While basically the offers by companies are always the same, namely non-regular re-employment after retirement and usually only up to age 65, they do not seem to reflect in sufficient manner the increasingly diverse preferences of older workers. At the same time, policy regulations seem unsuitable for redressing the imbalance of power in negotiations between companies and older workers and tearing down the barriers towards successful employment for older people. A lot of work remains to be done.

Tackling the research gap on “New New Religions”

Researchers from the universities of Manchester, Otago, Nanzan, Princeton and Sophia University (Tokyo), as well as researchers from the DIJ have established a research initiative to look into the impact of the 1995 terrorist attacks by the religious group Ōmu Shinrikyō on the religious situation in Japan.

On March 20, 1995, members of the Ōmu Shinrikyō killed 27 people and injured 6,300 in subway stations in Tokyo by releasing sarin gas. They understood their actions to be logical consequences of end times prophecies of their spiritual leader, Shōkō Asahara. He had not only nourished persecution phobia among his followers, but also identified the year 2000 as the year of the apocalypse.

In the course of police investigations and as part of the media coverage, the question was raised why no one had anticipated the plans and intrigues of the Ōmu group and why nobody had rang the alarm bells. A few academics who had portrayed Ōmu as not dangerous or unjustly investigated by the authorities entered the limelight. One of them, Hiromi Shimada from Japan Women’s University in Tokyo, even lost his job as a consequence of his comments.

The silver market phenomenon

Starting with the lead market Japan, the emergence of a “silver market” in ageing societies has already become a global phenomenon. About two years after the publication of the first edition of the book *The Silver Market Phenomenon*, the second edition of this edited volume is now available.

Demographic change will also shift market segments. When considering the declining number of young people in Japan, the youth segment can be anticipated to decline, and it thus behaves very much in the opposite way to the continuously growing senior segment. This silver market, on the other hand, seems to offer a number of business opportunities. However, many

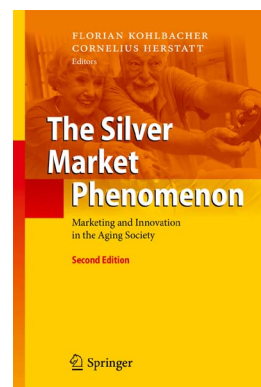
Fearful withdrawal

Shocked by the scale of events, the large majority of Japanese academics studying religion decided to withdraw from research on Ōmu and other so-called “New New Religions”. This adverse attitude also spread into the realms of political science in Japan and is part of the explanation why there is relatively little academic research being conducted on the “Clean Government Party” (Kōmeitō) and its religious mother organization Sōka Gakkai. In general, the apprehension towards “New New Religions” has led to a growing gap in the knowledge of religious organizations in Japan. The sensationalist attention that the tabloid and weekly press devote to said religious groups is hardly appropriate compensation for the lack of academic research.

On August 31, members of the research initiative will conduct a public lecture event at the DIJ. Contributions from the group will be published in a special issue of the *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* in spring 2012.

companies still lack the necessary experience, processes and know-how to develop products suitable for the silver segment and market them efficiently and successfully. In 33 concisely written chapters, experts from academia and business practice analyse the challenges and chances offered by the silver market and explain success factors for product development, innovation and technology management, as well as marketing and advertising based on theoretical concepts, empirical data and real-world examples. The second edition now available has been completely updated and features nine new chapters with a strong focus on marketing and innovation.

◀ **PD Dr. Axel Klein**, political scientist, is in charge of the DIJ project “Religious Organizations and the Politics of Happiness”.
klein@dijtokyo.org



◀ Just published: *The Silver Market Phenomenon: Marketing and Innovation in the Aging Society*, 2nd edition, Springer 2011.

◀ **Dr. Florian Kohlbacher**, is co-editor of the volume together with Professor Cornelius Herstatt from Hamburg University of Technology.
kohlbacher@dijtokyo.org

Contemporary Japan 23(1)

Lifestyles in Transition – Antecedents and Consequences of Social Change

Issue Editors:

Carola Hommerich
and Florian Kohlbacher

Maria Grajdian:

Kiyoku, tadashiku, utsukushiku:
Takarazuka Revue and the
project of identity (re-)solidi-
fication

Alexandra Hambleton:

Reinforcing identities: Non-
Japanese residents, television
and cultural nationalism in
Japan

Gitte Hansen:

Eating disorders and self-harm
in Japanese culture and cul-
tural expressions

Isaac Gagne:

Spiritual safety nets and net-
worked faith: The “liquidity”
of family and work under late
modernity

Wolfgang Jagodzinski:

Autonomy, religiosity and
national identification as de-
terminants of life satisfaction:
A theoretical and empirical
model and its application to
Japan



The DIJ Newsletter is published
both in German and in English
and is also available for down-
load as a full-text version from
our website.

For a printed copy, please contact:
dinkel@dijtokyo.org

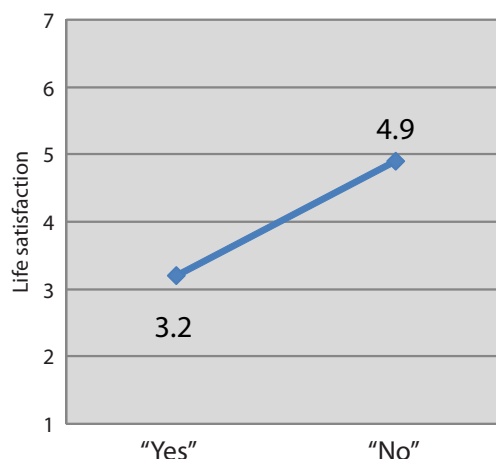
Visit us on the Internet at:

www.dijtokyo.org

How to be happy

Social embeddedness and a feeling of being needed by others prove to be especially important for happiness in Japan. A representative survey conducted in September 2009 by the DIJ shows that Japanese who feel redundant to society are markedly less satisfied with their lives than those who feel that they are able to make a useful contribution to the social community. In comparison with Germany, this relationship was much stronger and implies that in Japan the feeling of “being able to do something for others” is of higher importance for personal happiness. Especially among younger Japanese, life satisfaction is reduced by the feeling of being redundant to society. *C.L.H.*

I feel like nobody needs me.



Data: DIJ/Hommerich, 2009.

Read for you

Natsumi IWASAKI (2009): *Moshi kōkō yakyū no joshi manējā ga dorakkā no Manejimento o yondara* [What if the girl manager of the high school baseball team reads Drucker’s *Management*]. Tokyo: Diamond-sha, 272 pages, 1,600 yen (ISBN 978-4-478-01203-1).

Moshi dora – the short form of the book title – is both juvenile literature and management textbook at the same time. Iwasaki tells the story of high school student Minami Kawashima who becomes “manager” of her school’s baseball team where she successfully implements the concepts of management guru Peter Drucker. The novel provides an unvarnished glimpse onto daily life in a Japanese high school and the organizational features of the extra-curricular club activities. Usually, the female “managers” of an all-male team do not have a particularly prominent role, but Minami takes her task seriously and the label *manējā* literally. She radically changes the baseball team. *Moshi dora* has sold more than 2 million copies to date and is to be screened as anime on NHK in March 2011. *F.K.*

Catchword

ジャパン シンドローム
(*Japan shindorōmu*)

Introduced by the public broadcasting corporation NHK, the term “Japan syndrome” (*Japan shindorōmu*) has lately come to be used to signify the ageing of Japanese society. Since the beginning of this year, NHK has investigated various side effects brought about by rapid demographic changes: the transformations of the labour market, the insecure pension system, new forms of cohabitation and the deflating economy. With its choice of the catchphrase “Japan syndrome”, NHK refers to a special report by the British weekly *The Economist*, which first described Japan’s current malaise using this term. NHK additionally coined a Japanese version, *Nihon shōkōgun* [Japan syndrome], to accompany the katakana word for better understanding. NHK features on the topic will continue in the coming weeks, including the presentation of some DIJ projects. *C.L.H.*

Page 1 {“Japan Syndrome” video still} by courtesy of NHK. Page 2 {statistic} Florian Kohlbacher. Page 3 {book cover} Springer-Verlag. Page 4 {statistic} Carola Hommerich. Author key: *C.L.H.* – Carola Hommerich; *F.K.* – Florian Kohlbacher; *J.A.* – Junko Ando.

Publisher: Deutsches Institut für Japanstudien Tokyo (DIJ).

Person responsible according to the German Press Law: Florian Coulmas.

Editors: Junko Ando (editor in chief), Florian Kohlbacher.

Address: DIJ Tokyo, Jochi Kioizaka Bldg., 7-1 Kioicho, Chiyoda-ku, Tokyo 102-0094, Japan.

Tel: +81 (0)3 3222-5077 – **Fax:** +81 (0)3 3222-5420.